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VISIT OF FRENCH AND BELGIAN DELEGATIONS IN THE USSR

Comment; Summary: The following report contains information on:

1. The visit of a delegation of French miners, July - August 1952;
2. The visit of a French delegation organized by the Association France-USSR, August - September 1952;
3. The visit of a delegation of Belgian miners, Spring of 1951. Furthermore, a delegation of French students is mentioned in the text.

It is to be noted that the data on the French delegations stems exclusively from the French Communist daily newspaper l'Humanite and is reported here as it was published in that newspaper.

Numbers in parentheses refer to appended sources. 7

DELEGATION OF FRENCH MINERS

Moscow

Invited by the Central Council of the Soviet Coal Miners Union, a delegation of French miners led by Victorin Duguet, secretary-general of the Federation of Miners CGT, has arrived at Moscow.

The French miners, during their first day in the Soviet capital, visited the city, viewed buildings under construction, and in particular the University, admired the metro stations, and passed the evening at Gorki Park.

The French delegation will be received by the Donbass miners at the beginning of the week. (1)

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A member of the delegation, interviewed by Radio-Moscow on his first impressions of his visit in the Soviet capital, made the following statement: "We have become acquainted with the city. We have visited the site of the new university under construction, a magnificent work of Soviet architecture, as well as new quarters under construction lining a newly constructed street.... All the members of the delegation were strongly impressed by their visit to the Moscow metro. We have seen almost all the stations which were built before the war, those which were finished during the war, and the stations which were put in service this year...."

Seeing how much strength and genius the Soviet put toward peaceful purposes, we are again convinced they do not and cannot want war."

The French miners visited the Central Council of Soviet Trade-Unions on 11 July, where they became acquainted with the system of social insurance in the USSR. (2)

Tula Coal Mines

The delegation of French miners visited Tula, center of the coal basin situated to the south of Moscow. The delegates visited a mine shaft, the miners' rest home, and the vacation colony for miners' children.

One of the French delegates stated to a correspondent of Radio Moscow:

"What we saw in the mines permitted us to understand the excellent conditions in which our Soviet comrades work. The mines are provided with magnificent ventilating systems and perfect technical equipment. We saw a combine in operation. This machine makes the miners' work one hundred times easier."

Another delegate, speaking of his visit to the vacation colony, said:

"We saw healthy and happy children there.... I would say that after all we have seen in Russia, we can draw the following essential conclusion: a country where people work with such enthusiasm for their children's happiness cannot want war." (3)

Donets Basin

The delegation of French miners, after a trip to the Donets Basin, to Zhdanov on the Sea of Azov, and to Sochi on the Black Sea, returned to Moscow.

When interviewed by Radio Moscow, Victorin Duguet, the head of the delegation and secretary-general of the Federation of Miners, stated:

"In visiting the mines of the Donets Basin, we noticed the excellent working conditions of our Soviet comrades; we saw the coal-mining combine in operation. It is a truly remarkable invention. In the USSR, the machine is placed at the service of man; every effort is made here to facilitate the hard work of the miner.

We also visited the rest centers of Zhdanov and Sochi and saw the sanatoria where Soviet workers rest. We talked frequently with the guests and we can state that they were happy about their vacations.

For 20 days we have studied the life of the Soviet people, and each day we find new proof of their aspirations toward peace and a happy and prosperous life." (4)

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Interviews Given by Delegates to the Moscow Correspondent of L'Humanite, Jean Coin

The following is an interview given by Pierre Nury, shop steward at the Moutiers iron mine for 17 years, elected municipal councilor on the Socialist Party ticket and now performing the duties of deputy mayor of Moutiers (Meurthe-et-Moselle):

Coin: "What did you think of the Soviet Union before your trip?"

Nury: "When I was chosen to come to Russia, I was pleased and proud of having been selected to make this study trip. But I must be sincere with myself. When I left France, I had certain doubts about what was going on in the Soviet Union, notably on the subject of armament and about the life of the workers; and when I crossed the line of demarkation in Austria to enter the Soviet occupied zone, I admit, I was no more enthusiastic than before and I felt uncomfortable. I think that if I had dared, I would have turned back, but I held firm and do not regret it, because I found on the other side of what some call "the iron curtain" a cordiality and friendliness which exist nowhere else."

C.: "What impressed you most in Russia?"

N.: "In our capitalistic country, the bourgeois press tells us emphatically every day of the aggressive and expansionist aims of the USSR with respect to other countries. But during a month's trip in Russia, from Minsk to Moscow, from Tula to the Donets Basin, passing through Khar'kov and Stalino, from the Caucasus to the Black Sea, I have seen only construction of every kind going on. Dwellings for workers are being built as quickly as possible to replace shanties which are the last traces of the woeful Czarist regime. I saw dozens of sanatoria and rest homes under construction.... I saw the repair of old and the construction of new highways; I saw several camps of young pioneers and the Stalino Maternity Hospital; I also saw metallurgical and tool plants where production has nothing to do with war material. I also saw the local workers' clubs... and their libraries which absolutely contain no warlike literature. How can anyone conceive that a country such as Russia, which is building all that I have just mentioned, could want war? How and where would it obtain the money necessary to launch a new world conflict? Our leaders must be crazy or criminal to make such stupid remarks. From what I have seen, I am convinced that everything they say about the socialist country is false." (5)

The following is an interview given by Pierre Morelle:

Pierre Morelle was picked by the miners of Denain to visit the Soviet Union. After his trip in Russia, he gave the interviewer the following statements for L'Humanite:

"In my visits and contacts in mines, movies, and rest homes, I have noticed one thing which struck me immediately: the joy of life of the Soviet miners."

Also, it is not astonishing that such a people ardently desire peace. The Soviet workers lack nothing to keep them happy.

A young bachelor from Gorlovka told us that a third of his salary was enough for his food, and that he spent the other two thirds for clothes and amusements.

No cares for the future, since medical care and education are entirely free... Our delegation was very surprised by the quantitative and qualitative composition of the miners' meals: meat and fish three times a day.

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The Soviet miner can advance from laborer to engineer. All educational facilities are at his disposal. The Soviet Union has nothing to fear in raising their standard of living. On the contrary, it is pushing this development...The Soviet miner is not exhausted when he comes out of the mine. Machines have replaced men and pick hammers. There is no need for him to supplement his salary by cultivating a bit of land...The Soviet miner has rest homes such as the one at Sochi in which our delegation stayed for a week. This was an unforgettable experience for us. All the means for relaxation and recreation are put at the disposal of the miner and his family..."(6)

The following is an interview given by Jean Stella, President of the Regional Federation of the Iron Miners of the East and former member of the Socialist Party:

"To be completely sincere, I must indicate that my conception of true democracy, already sufficiently well established at the time of my departure for Russia, was more than amply confirmed by what I was able to see and hear during the course of our trip in the USSR.

For example, every worker is eligible for nomination for all labor-union positions. The decisive vote for filling labor-union positions takes place in the plenary assemblies where everyone may discuss the nominations.

A Soviet miner told me: I work in complete liberty and as hard as I can so that my output will increase my wages and at the same time serve the common cause.

We Soviet workers are entirely free to choose our labor leaders, just as we are free to choose our political deputies. Each worker has a chance to try for the most responsible positions, because in our libraries and recreation centers we can always further our education.

But we Soviet workers also have the right at any moment to demand the dismissal of any elected official who during his term might fail in his task. Moreover, when the director or engineer of a mine makes a mistake affecting the safety or health of one or several workers, the labor union, on request by the workers, can penalize this same director or engineer. Serious cases can lead to dismissal without precluding any penalties which may be imposed by competent courts.

There, comrades, miners, and workers of France, is true democracy which hardly resembles the fake capitalistic democracy by which thousands upon thousands of workers have been punished because they dared to show their dissatisfaction, whether against certain management methods, or against certain reactionary government methods.

When we told in the USSR that our comrade Ricq had been suspended as shop steward and dismissed from his job for having spoken before the workers of his mine in favor of peace, the Soviet workers were flabbergasted and could not believe such a monstrosity. That is well understandable, because the Soviet Constitution, which guarantees the right to work to every citizen, is fully respected." (7)

The following is an interview given by Etienne Ricq:

Etienne Ricq has 28 years of service at Pit 14 of Oignies (Pas-de-Calais). Because he spoke in favor of peace, he was sentenced to a fine of 2,000 francs and relieved of his duties as shop steward and master miner. He is now unemployed. At the end of the trip he gave the interviewer the following statement:

"It is with great joy that I became a member of the 14-man French delegation which visited the Soviet Union. The working conditions of the Soviet miners interested me particularly.

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I visited three mines: a lignite mine, a flat seam mine, and an inclined seam mine.

All the faces are equipped with combines furnished with safety devices and with pulverizers to lay the dust. The props follow the machine closely, while in France the miners are constantly obliged to report lack of material to the mine administration.

The main tunnels where the trains run are 2.5 meters high and 3.7 meters wide. The trains run in complete safety; no collision is possible because a dispatcher directs them. A special train, equipped with fire-fighting equipment and carbonic acid, is always ready for action... In all the shafts above and below ground there is an infirmary and a registered nurse to help the injured. Accidents are very rare: statistics show that only 2 percent of the workers are injured, minor accidents included. I noticed that all the mines were very well ventilated and that each shaft had ventilators and reserve motors..."(8)

The following is an interview given by Marcel Outin, mine engineer, who was discharged for having taken part in the strike at Firminy in 1948:

"I was particularly impressed by the extent of modernization and mechanization in the Soviet mines. Whether in the mines of Tula or in the Donbass, the fatigue element in mining operations is enormously reduced by the use of modern machines. I saw the coal-cutting machines working on the face of a coal seam 2 meters thick; I saw combines breaking down, crushing, and loading the coal onto scraper conveyors. Without much trouble, the miners who run these machines reach an output far beyond the quota set by the management and the union. Consequently their base salaries are increased notably.

Such a method of extraction allows the miners to give more attention to matters of safety. I also observed the dispatcher directing trains in the supply galleries and noted the importance of the telephone system at the bottom of the mine.

We cannot help but compare these mines with our French mines where only slight and usually ill-advised modernization has been carried out. More and more miners are becoming technicians, and it is the modernization process which gives common laborers the opportunity of becoming engineers.

I may add that the Soviet miners participate actively by suggestions and constructive criticism in the modernization of mines. At the Kirov plant where combines are made, suggestions by miners were taken into consideration. Furthermore, it is remarkable that only Soviet machines are used..."(9)

Excerpts From a Series of Articles by Jean Coin on the Coal Field From Moscow to the Donbass

Jean Coin, Moscow correspondent of L'Humanite, accompanied the delegation of French miners and published a series of five articles in that newspaper.

Moscow Coal Region

In the morning, we arrived in the Moscow coal region. Behind us is Tula.

The descent. The rapid flight of the cable. Maria Bobrinova, a young 30-year old geometric engineer, accompanies us. At the landing, a young girl controls the ascent; another is in charge of the automatic machine which empties trucks and charges the skip; a third runs the rail-car... Finally, the heart of the mine and the room where the combine works. The Donbass combine does

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the undercutting, the cutting, and the loading of the coal. It saws the coal with its incisors, grinds it with its molars, while the steel tongue loads the 30 tons and more, depending on the opening in the conveyor chute.

"An intelligent machine," remarked Ivan Merkin, manager of the Donbass combine. He told me that the output of the Moscow basin is 33 times larger than before the war. A single mine produces as much coal as the entire basin in 1913. (10)

Donbass. The Stalino region whose output was 45 percent of the Donbass' production (154 shafts; 239 extracting machines; 189 ventilators; 266 machine sheds; 241 administrative buildings; 1,900 cutting machines; 800 electromotors; 760 pumps; 8,617 private homes; 330,000 square meters of community buildings) had been completely destroyed by the Germans. It took only 5 years for the Soviets to restore this region, not only to rebuild the former Donbass, but to put it on an entirely new basis and to make of it with its new installations, its gardens, its inhabitants, the most modern and mechanized basin in the world.

I went below ground in several mines. I traveled in the basin. I went from Stalino to the shores of the Sea of Azov, to Mariupol' whose new name is Zhdanov.

Donbass now produces more coal than before the war. A third of its length has metal pit props; 97 percent of the cutting is done with combines; the trucking and loading of the cars and the skips are completely mechanized. (11)

Nikitovka and Chistyakov Mines. At the Nikitovka mine at Gorlovka, the electric trains loaded with miners roll toward the cutting face. At the Chistyakov mine, Vasilii Kuchier, with his two aides, established the new record for the Donbass combine in cutting in July 18,355 tons on a 250-meter face...The combines dig the coal. Three men guide and supervise the enormous gnawing; it advances 24 meters per day.

I went down into a room rising 140 meters with an almost vertical inclination of 70 percent. I watched the combine as it worked on a 70-centimeter seam. It worked 140 meters in a single day. The machine and its operator are protected by a steel roof on which the prop setters work.

At Nikitovka, two surprises, inconceivable in capitalistic mines, awaited me: in one gallery an electric engine and its safety train, carrying 10,000 liters of carbonic acid, nozzles and gas masks, is always ready. The train has not been needed in 4 years. Soviet scholars affirm that 95 percent of the accidents are prevented, but in case of failure, the quarters are evacuated. In another gallery, there is an infirmary. There have been no fatal accidents and only two permanent disabilities since the reopening of the mine in 1944. (12)

Kochegar. A Soviet miner says that the Kochegar mine is no longer as it was in his childhood and in the early days of socialism, because it is now completely mechanized. For the first 6 months of the year, the team [not specified] cut 9,000 tons over and above its quota. The miners are the best-paid workers in the USSR. A miner stated: "In our team [not specified] each worker receives from 80 to 90 rubles as base salary, but the bonuses amount to 4,000 to 7,000 rubles each month, without counting the seniority bonus. This more than doubles our salary for December and makes it two and a half times higher than before the war. We receive our work clothes free, as well as rubber boots, tools and fuel (774 kilograms per month in the winter and 450 kilograms per month in the summer).

A total of 33,000 Donbass miners have built their own homes since the end of the war, and 1,387 have their own automobiles.

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Kochegar has 87 engineers and technicians, as well as 200 specialists and foremen. The number of workers is growing smaller while the number of specialists and engineers taken from among the workers is increasing. (13)

DELEGATION ORGANIZED BY ASSOCIATION FRANCE-USSR

In the morning of 11 August 1952, a large delegation organized by the Association France-USSR, left for the Soviet Union on invitation of the Soviet Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries.

Composition of Delegation

Henri Denis, professor at the law faculty of the University of Rennes, director of the Catholic newspaper Ouest-Matin;

Louis Heron de Villefosse, writer, former chief of staff of Free French Naval Forces [another source describes him as a "member" of the Free French Naval Forces, now residing at rue de Clichy, Longjumeau (Seine-et-Oise) (14)];

Janine Bouissounouse, writer;

Jacques Madaule, writer, mayor of Issy-les-Moulineaux;

Celestin Ferre, mayor of Pavillon-sous-Bois, socialist;

Francois De Geoffre, journalist, former pilot of the Normandie-Niemen regiment.

Maurice Brun, lawyer, MRP- municipal councilor at Montlucon;

Jean Tricart [also spelled Tricard], professor at the University of Strasbourg;

Gabriel Citerne, joiner, former deputy, judge at the High Court of Justice;

Raymond Gaudin, professor at Nantes, municipal councilor at La Montagne (Loire-Inferieure);

Georges Sautier [also spelled Sauthier], professor at the Technical College of Pau, former president of the Ligue des Droits de l'Homme;

Roger Chevallier [also spelled Chavalier], schoolteacher at Dijon;

Jean Fromy, employee at the Electricite de France, member of the Force Ouvriere trade-union;

Emile Tersen, university professor;

Henri Pouget, secretary of Mouvement Universitaire des 150 (University Movement of the 150);

Renee Bourdon. (7)

[On 10 September 1952, the same source (l'Humanite) reported the following: "A French delegation..returned yesterday from a visit in the Soviet Union. Led by Henri Denis..the delegation was composed of the following....." The listing of names then given was compared with the one given at the time of departure, (containing 16 names) and it was found that the following names do not appear on the latter list: Emile Tersen, Henri Pouget, and Renee Bourdon. (15)]

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With the France-USSR delegation, Jacques Madaule, mayor of Issy-les-Moulineaux, arrived in Moscow after a trip to Belorussia. According to Radio Moscow he said: "I was so impressed by Minsk, with its newly constructed buildings, its thoroughfares, and its new squares...all this in a city which was almost entirely destroyed during the war. At the time of our stay in Belorussia, we also visited the Academy of Sciences of the Republic. Its members are undertaking the great task of draining swamps and preparing forest belts...We know that true science must better man's life. This theme is carried out by all the Soviet scholars." (16)

Dorets Kolkhoz

The delegation visited the Dorets kolkhoz near Moscow on 1 September.

Taking leave of the workers, Prof Henri Denis said: "We have seen that the kolkhoz assures the peasants of a comfortable life. When we return to France, we shall tell the truth about what we have seen. I think that what we have to say will be a contribution to the struggle for peace." (17)

Moscow Press Conference

The delegation, after a 3-week trip which took it from Moscow to Minsk, to Stalingrad, and to the Lenin (Volga-Don) Canal, has returned to Moscow.

During the course of a press conference held yesterday, Henri Denis released a statement approved by all the delegates which said:

"We have noted the enthusiastic participation of the entire population in the huge tasks which are being accomplished today in Russia. We can affirm how certain it appears to us that the people of the Soviet Union want peace and how unthinkable it seems that their leaders could plan aggression against other peoples." (18)

Stalingrad

The delegation was invited to visit Stalingrad, and at the end of this visit the delegates discussed their impressions on Radio-Moscow. Jacques Madaule made the following statement: "...The first lesson of Stalingrad is that of victorious resistance to aggression. The second lesson is that of reconstruction in peace for peace. Indeed, the men of Stalingrad who fought and won when they were attacked are now engaged in another battle--the battle for the transformation of nature.

It is not without good reason that the Volga-Don Canal, for example, is so near Stalingrad; it is not without good reason that we saw at the gates of Stalingrad forest belts which with the water they hold will tend to transform not only the soil but the climate." (19)

Second Trip to Belorussia

On the return of the delegation from another trip to Minsk, Roger Chevallier told in a short speech over Radio Moscow about his impressions on child care in the Soviet Union:

"What wonderful youth, raised in the love of life and of peace, in the love of men of every country, reaching out toward the great and the beautiful in man," he exclaimed after having seen the pioneer camp of the Kalinin factory

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set up 30 kilometers from the city. And he added: "At Minsk we visited the orphanage for victims of the war and resistance. Naturally, the children live under the best conditions of health and comfort..."(19)

Statements and Press Conferences After Return to Paris

Returning to Paris on 9 September 1952 from their trip to Moscow, Minsk, Stalingrad, and to the Volga-Don Canal, the members of the delegation stressed the tremendous effort made by the entire Soviet nation in reconstruction and new construction.

Their statement of 10 September 1952 follows:

"We want to affirm still more strongly how certain it appears to us that the people of the Soviet Union want peace and how unthinkable it seems to us that their leaders plan any aggression against other people... We visited the Volga-Don Canal which irrigates a wide expanse of territory, permitting the feeding of tens of millions of people. The fact that the USSR is engaged in such great undertakings assures us that the Soviets are working only for the betterment of living conditions. If the Soviet Union challenges the western world, it is not a military but a peaceful challenge."

At a press conference held last night of 9 September in Paris, Messrs Jacques Madaule, Celestin Ferre, Francois de Geoffre, Gabriel Citerne, Georges Gautier, and Jean Fromy gave additional evidence of peaceable development in Russia.

In conclusion and in denunciation of the wild slanderous campaign against Russia which is being carried on by the French radio, the delegates asked the reporters and others present at the press conference to conduct a campaign to obtain permission for the delegates to broadcast the truth about what they saw in the Soviet Union. (15)

"A real song of work and peace," Celestin Ferre said the night before last of 9 September, speaking of the Soviet people. "A real delight. People work without difficulty because they benefit from an intensive mechanization in all the tasks they face."

However, Celestin Ferre, socialist mayor of Pavillon-sous-Bois, did not hide the apprehension he felt before the trip, his fears of what he would find there. He told the reporters and guests at the press conference held the very morning of the delegation's return from Russia: "I expected to see morose faces, troubled people brooding about their misfortunes. Everywhere I saw only happy faces, and that is easily explained: in Russia, of course, there is no longer unemployment nor any worry about it. I was also worried by the work 'Stakhanovite.'" I pictured men bearing this name as people crushing their comrades with work. But I saw some of the Stakhanovites, and I vow that they are simply first-rate workers, men who constantly seek improvements in working conditions so that their co-workers will benefit. When production increases, it is all the workers who will profit. And the Stakhanovites, far from mistrusting their co-workers, try to help them to become familiar with new methods."

Jacques Madaule, mayor of Issy-Les-Moulineaux elected on the MRP ticket stated:

"The Soviet accomplishments - development of millions of hectares from desert land and transformation of nature - aim to solve the world's problem of over a billion deaths by starvation. It is from this nonmilitaristic point of view only that the Soviet Union defies the western nations," Madaule said, in answer to a question about the way in which Soviet young people are raised:

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"Young people are brought up to believe in fraternity with all peoples. They are taught that all people have equal rights which must be respected." Another reporter asked: "Do you approve of French policy toward the Soviet Union in the last few years?" Madaule's answer was:

"No, I do not approve of it. That is why I quit the M.P. a year ago." Francois de Geoffre, former pilot in the Normandie-Niemen Regiment told of the intense emotion he felt upon returning to Russia after an absence of 7 years. He did not recognize Moscow; he found immense modern buildings there. He was particularly interested in commercial aviation and its equipment which he found to be as modern as that of any Western nation.

"The Soviet people make wide use of airplanes. At least 75 percent of the people use this method of transportation when they go away for a rest or a vacation."

He emphasized the obvious desire for peace which was expressed everywhere in Russia.

"What do the Soviet people say about the Fifth Five-Year Plan?", asked another reporter.

Gabriel Citerne answered: "Everyone spoke about it and asked us what we thought of it. It is the great topic, the great joy. The Soviets know that it will mean more improvements in their standard of living. They are happy about it, and they are proud."(20)

Joint Press Conference by Members of Several Delegations

On 18 October, l'Humanite announced a joint press conference by members of several French delegations which have been in the Soviet Union during the past 2 years. The paper lists as participants of this conference the following: Henri Wallon, Jacques Madaule, Bernard Lafaille, Dr Lamaze, Fernand Grenier, Alban Satragne, Charles Bettelheim, Celestin Ferre, Henri Pouget, Francois de Geoffre, Jean-Maurice Hermann, Jean Baby, Jules Duchat, Roland Talleux, Pierre Debray, Nelly Cru, Suzanne de Brunhoff, Gillette Ziegler, Pierre Sicard, Emile Pasquier, Francois Furet, and Claude-Charles Mathon.(21) The following is a report by l'Humanite on this conference which took place on 20 October 1952.

Around Professor Weill-Halle of the Academie de Medecine, there were more than 20 witnesses who came to bring the weight of their authority and their good faith to this presentation to the press and to the participants in the Regional Meetings organized by the Association France-USSR for 16, 23 and 30 November. Present were: Doctor Wallon, professor at the College de France; Jacques Madaule, mayor of Issy-les-Moulineaux; Bernard Lafaille, professor at the Ecole Centrale; Louis de Villefosse; Janine Bouissoucouise; General Tubert; Lamaze; Fernand Grenier; C. Ferre, Francois de Geoffre; J.-M. Hermann; Jules Duchat; Roland Talleux; Pierre Debray; Nelly Cru; Suzanne de Brunhoff; E. Pasquier; F. Furet, and C. Mathon. There were too many present for all to speak, but they all approved what a few had to say.

Louis de Villefosse spoke of the great work of reconstruction; Bernard Lafaille expressed his firm opinion, based on what he had seen and heard, that the country of 25 million orphans does not want war.

C. Ferre, socialist mayor of Pavillons, spoke as a metalworker; he observed the situation and the work of the Soviet metalworkers and learned about "Stakhanovism": "a people who have reached that point cannot want war," he said.

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For Jacques Madaule, it is the absence of all warlike spirit, the feeling of fraternity toward all peoples which impressed him. The Soviet citizen knows that a continued increase in his standard of living depends on two things: his work and the maintenance of peace.

Francois de Geoffre, after having answered a question on civil aviation, profoundly moved the entire audience in speaking of his 53 comrades whose graves he decorated. He also spoke of the will for peace of the men with whom he had fought and against whom he cannot visualize a conflict.

Suzanne de Brunhoff gave several examples of the desire for understanding and friendship that the recent delegation of students to Russia was able to notice.

Nelly Cru, militant of the Mouvement de Liberation du Peuple, spoke of the life on a kolkhoz, and of children instructed in the love of peace.

Professor Weill-Halle concluded by recalling the objectives of the Regional Meetings of November: to aid in the understanding of Soviet reality, to show that understanding and coexistence with the USSR are possible and in the interest of our country, and, finally, to contribute to the preparation for the Peoples' Peace Congress.(22)

On 20 September, Le Populaire reported that Celestin Ferre has been suspended and relieved of all his duties as a socialist until a decision can be reached by the Commission Federal des Conflits. L'Humanite attributes this suspension to the fact that Ferre had been a member of the Association France-USSR delegation to Russia(23)

DELEGATION OF BELGIAN MINERS IN RUSSIA

In the spring of 1951, 12 workers from Ougree-Marihaye visited the USSR where they were the guests of Soviet labor unions. Their impressions of the trip have just been published by the Liege section of the FGTB (Federation Generale du Travail de Belgique). The report states that they were well received whenever they were formally presented. "However," the report emphasizes, "this was not the case where the delegation was not formally presented, since the Soviet citizen seemed to be very suspicious of foreigners and kept as much as possible in the background." The authors of the report noted further that their itinerary was directed and guided by the Soviets. They were not able to see Stalingrad or Taganrog, nor any coal mine or kolkhoz; nor were they permitted to see any stores. They saw the coking plant at Zaporozh'ye from a distance of 200 meters

The reports states that the delegates did not see any evidence of terror and stated that there is freedom of movement -- at least for the Russians. They affirm that there is freedom of organization for labor unions as well as freedom of worship. As far as freedom of the press is concerned, they report: "On the basis of discussions we had, it is apparent that the press is controlled. Our Soviet comrades are either not informed at all or receive biased reports on what goes on in other countries."

In regard to the visit to the steel mill at Zaporozhstal', the report says: "We saw women operating traveling cranes and lathes, coupling locomotives, greasing rolling trains and vending carbonated water. The women work nights. The plant has a restaurant and a canteen, but, in spite of their questions, the members of the delegation were unable to ascertain the price of a meal in the restaurant."

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At the Dnepro Ges imeni Lenin (power plant), "the distribution of work shocked the greater part of our delegation. Probably because of the shortage of manpower existing in the country, the women were again observed doing work which our social legislation has long reserved for men. We actually observed very young girls laying bricks, building walls, working with pick and shovel, and operating air hammers."

On the subject of concentration camps which they saw -- from a distance -- guarded by armed men, the delegates received the traditional explanation: "...the labor leaders explained to us that these were common criminals undergoing rehabilitation while working under surveillance and that they are actually paid." However, the Liege workers were not able to enter here any more than they were able to enter the kolkhozes or the coal mines.(24)

The following photographs, not reproduced herein, are available in the sources as indicated: Pierre Nury and a group of young Pioneers(5); ten French miners at the "Donbass" mine in Gorlovka with a pithead structure in the background(6); the Association France-USSR delegation at a rest home in Mariupol'; (Jean Coin and Victorin Duguet are identified in this photograph)(7); the same delegation at Moscow's Red Square(8).7

SOURCES

1. L'Humanite, 14 Jul 52
2. Ibid., 15 Jul 52
3. Ibid., 19 Jul 52
4. Ibid., 31 Jul 52
5. Ibid., 9 Aug 52
6. Ibid., 11 Aug 52
7. Ibid., 12 Aug 52
8. Ibid., 13 Aug 52
9. Ibid., 14 Aug 52
10. Ibid., 18 Aug 52
11. Ibid., 20 Aug 52
12. Ibid., 22 Aug 52
13. Ibid., 25 Aug 52
14. Bulletin de l'Association d'Etudes et d'Information Politiques Internationales (B.E.I.P.I.), Vol IV, No 77, 16 - 30 Nov 52
15. L'Humanite 10 Sep 52
16. Ibid., 25 Aug 52
17. Ibid., 3 Sep 52
18. Ibid., 4 Sep 52
19. Ibid., 16 Sep 52
20. Ibid., 11 Sep 52
21. Ibid., 18 Oct 52
22. Ibid., 21 Oct 52
23. Ibid., 22 Sep 52
24. L'Usine Nouvelle, 25 Sep 52

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